

Kyodan

News Letter

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CAN DEMOCRACY

SURVIVE UNDER

THE EMPEROR SYSTEM?

Part I. "Kimi ga yo"

Does Japan
Have A
National
Anthem?

by Helen POST

Christians in Japan consider the Emperor System, beginning with the Meiji Restoration in 1867, a tightly knit system of political and social control that sustains itself through a series of interlocking devices or supports. Many of these may not, in themselves, seem important; but, in combination, they are felt to produce a highly integrated system with power centralized in the hands of a few powerful people around the figure of the Emperor.

In contrast to this, the democratic system established by the constitution of 1946, locates the sovereign political power in the people of Japan, identifies the Emperor as a "symbol" of the nation, and guarantees freedom of thought, religion and speech.

The following article should be read with this in mind. The national anthem issue is part of a whole set of trends which alert Christians, and others in society, see as stemming from the efforts of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party to restore the Emperor System.

The method of achieving change in Japan tends not to be open discussion and decision but, rather, a behind-the-scenes building up of momentum which issues in a fait accompli.

WHAT SHALL A DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE SING?

Ask someone, "What's your national anthem?" and you'll often get a prompt response, if not a few bars of the melody. But not in Japan. Here the question is apt to be met with uncertainty or hesitation, if not a discourse on the present political situation.

The slow, solemn melody intoned sonorously by trombones and bass horns on state occasions is the "Kimi ga yo," which has often passed as the national anthem. Yet there has never been any legal action designating it so. Since the end of World War II, it has been more like an echo of pre-war Japan persisting in the minds of government leaders and some of the older generation.

This is the song that is played when a Japanese Olympic star steps forward to receive a gold medal, in musical salutes on formal diplomatic occasions, or at the end of the broadcast day of NHK, semi-government Japan Broadcasting Corporation. And it's part of the traditional ceremonies on the final day of the popular sumo tournaments.

The meaning of the words of "Kimi ga yo," which the Meiji Restoration promoted, is "May the reign of our Emperor prosper for a thousand, for eight thousand years...." The

appropriateness of these words now, under a constitution which defines the Emperor as a symbol, not the sovereign, of the state, and the intent of the government's efforts to make it the national anthem, have been questioned by many people. What has heightened the dissonance recently is reference, in a new Ministry of Education Curriculum Guide of July, 1977, to "Kimi ga yo" as the "national anthem." This is the first time in post-war years that such a statement has been made in an official government document.

Whereas previous Guides have said that "It is desirable that "Kimi ga yo" be sung on national holidays," the new Guide directs that "the national anthem, 'Kimi ga yo,' is to be sung on national holidays." It instructs teachers to acquaint students with the song in ways appropriate to their level of understanding, from a familiarity with the melody to an understanding of the meaning of the words.

"Kimi ga yo" is adapted from an old Japanese poem which did not originally refer to the Emperor. In 1880, it was first used with a composition based on Gagaku court music and played by the Navy Band for the Emperor's birthday. It then came to be played regularly at the imperial palace for ceremonies centering in the Emperor. In the

"Kimi ga yo" Issue (continued)

1890s the Ministry of Education introduced it along with other songs, in the schools curriculum "to instill good moral values." In the Russo-Japanese War, it was used to encourage patriotism among the total citizenry. Not until much later, 1936, did the Ministry of Education, under the military government, refer to it in curriculum materials as the "national anthem."

With the defeat of Japan in 1945, the singing of "Kimi ga yo" was discontinued, as was the displaying of the Hinomaru flag. When the occupation by U.S. forces ended, the song began to be played again in ceremonies on the Emperor's birthday, by NHK and at the sumo tournaments. In 1958, for the first time in post-war years, Ministry of Education Guides referred to the "desirability" of singing "Kimi ga yo" on national holidays, but teachers responded in different ways, some complying, some ignoring the comment.

The direct reference, now, to "Kimi ga yo" as the "national anthem" is thus considered a new step. It is complicated by the fact that the words "national anthem" were not in the original recommendations prepared by the Education Curriculum Council, but were inserted just before the Guide went to press.

WHO SUPPORTS MAKING "KIMI GA YO"THE NATIONAL ANTHEM?

Among supporters are found leaders of the Liberal Democratic Party who are committed to returning Japan to the Emperor System; older people with a nostalgia for the past; young people vulnerable to nationalistic sentiments. Some of the major reasons given for their positions follow, with counter-arguments by opponents.

"Education should instill loyalty to one's country, and music is one way to accomplish this." Prime Minister FUKUDA told a group of kindergarten mothers, "It is necessary, through education to nurture the kind of loyalty toward the nation that will regard the Hinomaru as the national flag and 'Kimi ga yo' as the national anthem."

Opponents reject "loyalty to the nation" as the goal of education, affirming rather "respect for the individual and the search for truth and peace."

"'Kimi ga yo' is already accepted as the national anthem by people in Japan and overseas. It's become a part of the life of the people." According to a government survey, 77% of the Japanese people think "Kimi ga yo" is "an appropriate national anthem."

Those disapproving of its use as a national anthem say that other surveys have shown lower percentages. Also, in

the government survey, the figures ranged from 88% among people over 60 years of age to 57% among people in their early 20s. There are also children who know "Kimi ga yo" only as the "song of the sumo wrestlers."

"The government has clearly stated in the Diet that the song is the national anthem."

"Ex-Prime Minister MIKI did make such a statement. On the other hand, each of the last three Prime Ministers, including Miki, has avoided introducing it as a bill because of the strong opposition.

Comments from supporters: "It's appropriate to our tradition." "Because there was unity in Japan as a country before the war, it's not good to change the song." "Patriotism for one's country is very important."

WHO OPPOSES MAKING "KIMI GA YO"THE NATIONAL ANTHEM?

Among its opponents would be individual Christians and Christian organizations, teachers, scholars of history, mothers who were elementary school students during the last war, young people raised in post-war Japan under the democratic Constitution. In addition to their objections to the government's claims, they offer other reasons for opposing the "nationalization" of the song:

"As a national anthem, it would contradict the Constitution." IENAGA Saburo, historian, says, "With the change from the Meiji Constitution to the present Constitution, can we sing this song, even if the implication of the words is changed? It is clearly sung of the Emperor System. Isn't it very plain that this is contrary to the present Constitution, which recognizes the sovereignty of the people?"

"There has never been a legal decision making 'Kimi ga yo' the national anthem."

Government officials reply that no legal decision is necessary.

"There is danger that the song will become a test of loyalty to the nation and contravene freedom of faith." In a meeting between a member of the Ministry of Education and representatives of 98 organizations opposing the new wording in the Guides, the following dialogue took place:

Min. of Ed.: I don't think a national anthem has to be decided by law. Aren't there countries in which a piece of music has become the national anthem by custom, not law? ...And haven't we all come to think of "Kimi ga yo" as the national anthem?

Delegation: What do you mean "we"? We certainly don't think so.

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"Kimi ga yo" Issue (continued)

Min. of Ed.: Well, then, you're just not Japanese.

Delegation: (heatedly!) Your statement violates the Constitution. Before the end of the war, religious people who did not recognize the divinity of the Emperor were attacked as not Japanese. This is exactly why they oppose making "Kimi ga yo" the national anthem. It touches a very fundamental religious issue.

Min. of Ed.: I was only joking. I withdraw my remark.

Comments by persons opposed to the designation: "It doesn't appeal to young people." "I hate to hear it because of the painful memories it brings back." "A new national anthem should be written, or the words to this one changed." "It's hard to sing and hard to explain to today's students the meaning of the words." "I would be glad to sing it when it is appropriate--as my personal wish to the emperor on his birthday."

Opponents of the efforts to make "Kimi ga yo" the national anthem have met with members of the government, the Ministry of Ed. and the Diet. They have held rallies,

"KIMI GA YO" -- Words and Music

The original poem from which "Kimi ga yo" was adapted was a one-stanza tanka of 31 syllables which appeared in the Kokinshu, a collection of ancient poems compiled in 905, as well as later collections.

わが君は

千代にまほせ

Waga kimi wa

Chiyo ni mashimase

Sazare ishi no

Iwao to narite

Koke no musu made

May your life last

a thousand years;

till pebbles grow

to rocks and

gather moss.

These words "Waga kimi" referred to some one with whom a person had close relationships -- the head of the clan, or the samurai one served. In Muromachi and later periods it was sung at banquets, by all present, often as the closing song.

Over the years two changes were made. "Waga Kimi" was changed to "Kimi ga yo wa," which made it refer specifically to the power (Emperor) who exercised sovereignty over the whole "people." And "chiyo ni" (a thousand years) became "chiyo ni yachiyo ni" (a thousand, eight thousand years).

君が代は

千代に 八千代に

Kimi ga yo wa

Chiyo ni yachiyo ni

Sazare ishi no

Iwao to narite

Koke no musu made

The master's reign

shall last 1,000 and

8,000 years

till pebbles becoming rocks

shall be covered with moss!

An English band director who asked "What is your national anthem?" is said to have promoted the selection by Japanese band members of "Kimi ga yo." It was then arranged in Western harmony but never became popular. A few years later, the poem was set to music based on a mode of Gagaku, ancient court music, with help from a German musician, and this is the form in which it is heard today.

There is also the "Meiji English" version which YOSHIOKA Chiyokichi, who celebrates his 100th birthday on April 29 in his home in Urawa (see KNL No. 115, p.4), recently sang for a foreign guest who visited his home. Although for many years English songs were not heard in Japan, Chiyokichi recalled this version after the war, not as a paean of praise, but as the warm recollection of a boyhood English lesson.

"Let Mikado's Empire stand, till a thousand, ten thousand years, shall roll, till the sand in the brooklets grow to stone, and the moss from the pebbles emerald makes."

produced pamphlets and issued statements.

In June, 1977, a rally sponsored by committees of the Kyodan and the National Christian Council of Japan related to the Yasukuni Shrine problem and educational and social concerns, was attended by 120 persons. It issued a statement recalling how "Kimi ga yo" had been used before the war in promoting the Emperor System, inspiring the unity of the people as subjects of the Emperor and undergirding the wars of invasion by Japanese troops. It noted the failure of the Ministry of Education to reflect on pre-war nationalistic education that caused the people to fall into error and resulted in the sacrifice of one million persons in Japan and overseas. "Making the 'Kimi ga yo' the national anthem is a foolish attempt to retrogress in history," it said, ending with a request that the Ministry of Education and government rescind the action immediately.

Is the designation of "Kimi ga yo" as the national anthem the way to resolve the dilemma when Japanese are asked, "what is your national anthem?"

What shall a democratic people sing?

MISSIONARIES
"IN THE KITCHEN"

The annual conference for Kyodan related missionaries sponsored by the Council of Co-operation was held at Tozanso, Gotemba, Mar. 28-30, with 167 in attendance of whom 138 were missionaries from overseas working in the Kyodan and related institutions from Hokkaido to Okinawa. The other participants represented Kyodan Districts, the CoC related Schools Council, the Japan Christian Social Work League, the Japan-North American Commission on Cooperative Mission, mission groups in neighboring countries, and the CoC itself.

The theme -- Christian Witness in a Non-Christian World -- was ably addressed by Dr. John B. Cobb, Jr., (born in Japan of Kyodan-related missionary parents and now professor of systematic theology at the School of Theology in Claremont, Calif.) in three lectures on Christianity & Secularity, Christianity & Eastern Wisdom, and Christianity & The Global Future. Speaking from the standpoint of process theology, combining authoritative scholarship and a prophetic approach with his warm evangelical spirit, Dr. Cobb charmed, stimulated, and challenged his listeners with a comprehensive discussion of these pertinent topics. Animated, thoughtful response was elicited in the question periods and group discussions following the lectures.

The Kyodan Moderator, Rev. TODA Isuke, challenged the missionaries to share with their Japanese church in the suffering and joy that accompany efforts to establish more authentic mutuality in mission in the arena of history. He invited missionaries from abroad to come past the entryway and the parlor of the Japanese church family into the kitchen, where the real work is done; indicating that the Kyodan must also face the challenges of a "kitchen-labor relationship," including that of providing up to half of the financial support of its partners in mission.

Other important features of the conference were a reading of Orwell's "Animal Farm," a CoC Time (in which CoC issues were reviewed by Acting General Secretary FUSE Hideo and Schools Council representative KOBAYASHI Nobuo), remarkable musical leadership by Margaret Warren, and an inspired closing communion service given special meaning by its setting in the Easter season.

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SEMINARY ENROLLMENT GOING UP

Figures released at the beginning of the 1978 academic year show signs of an upward trend in theological seminary enrollments in general, though not in every case. The six Kyodan-related seminaries have reported a total of 96 new matriculants and 26 transfer entrants this month. These figures indicate a net enrollment increase when compared to 87 new theological students a year ago and the 56 who graduated and left the seminaries last month. Another 27 are remaining in school as master's degree candidates.

Significant jumps were recorded by Kwansei Gakuin Seminary and Tsurukawa Rural Institute. KG admitted 21 new students, 4 transfers, and 4 graduate students, almost three times the 10 who graduate in March. The Rural Evangelism Seminary graduated 3 in March and admitted 10 in April. For Kwansei Gakuin this is a continuation of last year's pattern when 5 were graduated and 15 admitted; but for Tsurukawa, which last year graduated 7 and admitted only 3, this is a dramatic reversal of what has been a downward spiral.

In contrast, Tokyo Biblical Seminary enrollment is still going down. It graduated 8 while admitting 2 in 1978, had 5 graduates and 2 new entrants in 1977.

As for the other schools, Japan Biblical Seminary is growing slightly, Tokyo Union Theological Seminary's net increase this year was 14, Doshisha's 22.

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NEW MINISTERS QUALIFY

On March 30, the Commission on Ministerial Qualifications announced that 37 had successfully completed the examinations of March 14-16. Of these new ministers, who will now be licensed in their respective District Assemblies, 20 are in their twenties, 12 are in their thirties, 3 their forties, and 2 over fifty. Three of the youngest group are women and five are women in their thirties. They are related to 10 of the Kyodan's 16 districts.

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TAKAKURA Tazuko --

A Woman Pastor in a Tokyo Slum

In postwar Japan, though economic reconstruction was booming and Tokyo's war scars rapidly healing, there were several pockets of people who were left behind in the march of restoration. Some were day laborers who had been brought from Korea to work in factories and coal mines and then fired without compensation when Korea gained independence. Some were postwar repatriates who had lost everything in overseas areas at the end of the war. Others were unemployed, homeless, and hopeless.



One such pocket was the Fukagawa slum where the Rev. Mrs. TAKAKURA Tazuko's unusual ministry as a woman pastor of Fukagawa Church got started in a small veneered cottage, nothing like a church in appearance, directly facing the slum area.

oo ** oo **

It was early in the morning on New Year's Day. Two or three clusters of poorly dressed people were hurrying toward the small Fukagawa Church, anticipating a hot bowl of Zouni (a special New Year's soup containing rice cake) served by a kind pastor's wife who was herself a pastor.

Japan takes a three-day holiday at New Year's. Dressed in beautiful clothes, most people happily exchange presents and greetings. Houses, streets, and buildings are spick and span and all Tokyo takes on a festive mood. But not so the slum dwellers. For them there are no waste articles from rich homes for rag-pickers to gather. There are no jobs for day-laborers. Homeless people can't find a restaurant open even if they could afford a meal. For these people New Year's is marked by empty days and empty stomachs.

When Tazuko realized this fact she turned the church into a joyful dining hall, providing free meals in a receptive atmosphere of warm fellowship for the first three days of each new year. Christmas offerings from other churches and from Christian schools for girls, like Joshi Sei Gakuin and Toyo Eiwa where Ms. Takakura had formerly taught, were used to support this program which continued for 17 years.

This is just one example of the kind of ministry the Takakuras brought to Fukagawa. Within the circle of people around the small church many men and women found hope and courage to live. Juvenile delinquents regained their footing, some becoming active participants in church activities. Twelve new Christian homes were born. The area which had long been an ugly "snow drift" of frustrated people gradually became a lively community of autonomous self-supporting workers.

oo ** oo **

Tazuko grew up in a traditional Japanese family where there was no expectation that any family member would become a Christian. Japan's defeat in World War II taught her that any truth which is limited within the framework of a particular "nation," "state," or "historical period" should not be called "the truth" at all. She began to grope for real truth, sometimes in Buddhism and sometimes in Christianity. As her graduation from Ochanomizu Women's College approached, however, she was already disappointed in her church life. She had been introduced to a church by a close friend, SUMIYA Yuko (Mrs. SUMIYA Mikio); but about that time the pastor, Rev. AKAIWA, announced his intention to join the Japan Communist Party. She was on the verge of turning from Christianity to Lao-tze and Chinese philosophy.

But one day Tazuko was led to the thought that before abandoning the church she should finish reading the Bible clear through. She started with the beginning of Genesis, and when she reached I John 3:16 her heart was caught by the words, "It is by this that we know what love is: that Christ laid down his life for us." She was baptized Easter Sunday, the year of her college graduation.

Until that day her question, "Which truth shall I take at the risk of my life?" had been merely her own private question. But when Jesus Christ became the solution, her neighbors' problems became hers as well. She visited orphans, runaways, ex-convicts, and unemployed. One day, walking along an unpaved muddy road in Fukagawa, she prayed, "Lord, use me for these people."

Her family would not send her to seminary, despite her ardent desire to prepare for pastoral work, so she had to support herself by teaching in a girls' high school while studying in a night seminary. Since she expected to become a minister to the poor she carefully kept her life style as simple as possible, and was able to save some money during the eight years she taught until finally graduating from Tokyo Union Theological Seminary. Without these savings

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Takakura Tazuko (continued)

and her habits of frugal living the hard days of her pioneer ministry at Fukagawa would have been unbearable.

Her gentle and graceful appearance give no hint of the difficulties of her early ministry. Sometimes she found her husband beaten and lying on the ground or had a bucket of kitchen garbage emptied on her own head. Helpless, frustrated, dissipated people were always around her. There were always too many things to be done.

oo ** oo **

Time passed. The church grew into the fullness of God's grace. All the debts for a new church building were paid. The area was no longer a slum.

"Fukagawa Church must never be like the Takakuras' private church. And the best time for a pastor to leave is when all is going well and there is no trouble between the pastor and the church officers or the congregation" the Takakuras said. In spite of the efforts of the church members to keep the pastors, who had been like parents to them, the Takakuras -- Tazuko, Kenji, and a daughter -- left Fukagawa for Chiba.

Today the Takakuras have nation-wide involvements and tasks beyond their service to Chiba Church in Chiba Sub-district of Tokyo District. Tazuko chairs the National Federation of Kyodan Women's Societies, which under her unique style of leadership is one of the few places in the Kyodan at the national level in which all the members can still cooperate regardless of theological and socio-political differences. She is also a leading figure in monthly anti-Yasukuni demonstrations, encouraging women in and outside the church to speak out for the future of the Japanese people as a whole beyond the slum areas of Tokyo.

(MIDZUNO Makoto)

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ANNOUNCING: Sculpture Exhibit of Rudolf Kuyten, Kyodan missionary, April 23-28, Waseda Hoshien Gallery; May 1-5, Hibiya Yamagata Gallery, Hibiya Park Bldg.

NEW MISSIONARIES APPOINTED

On March 28, at a meeting of the Committee for Ecumenial Ministries, the Rev. KAMURO Junichi was commissioned as a Kyodan missionary by Moderator TODA Isuke for one year's service in the UPC Synod of Lakes and Prairies, in the USA. Mr. and Mrs. Kamuro, and their three young children, left Haneda on April 7 for Omaha, Nebraska, where they will be making their headquarters for the next six months. Their ministry in and through UPC churches in three presbyteries in the Omaha area will be largely interpretive as they seek to share, from an Asian perspective, the insights and experience of Japanese Christians.

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At the same meeting formal action was taken to appoint the Rev. ARAKAWA Juntaro of Higashi Umeda Church, Osaka, for missionary service in Malaysia. Rev. Arakawa, with his wife, Natsue, and their two children, will be going to Sarawak in July to take up community development leadership responsibilities in response to an invitation from the Methodist Church in Malaysia.

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Warm Spring Breezes

The Kyodan Office and Board of Publications staff enjoyed two days in the sun away from the polluted Tokyo air on their spring outing April 14-15. Instead of pushing pencils and erasers around the office, the staff temporarily put behind their daily routine on a 2-day guided bus tour around the warm Boso Peninsula, delighting in the clean air, bamboo-covered mountain slopes and rough sea coast.

Some highlights were the pulsating rhythms of Polynesian Dancers from the Cook Islands, leaping dolphins and flying peacocks at the Namekawa Airando, and the colorful fields of spring flowers.

The escape from reality ended with a windy trip across Tokyo Bay by ferry which served as a reminder of the stormy days still ahead for the Kyodan. (GG)

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